

Message Text

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17

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9394

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT FI

SUBJECT: MIETTUNEN GIVES UP EFFORT FORM GOVERNMENT

REF: HELSINKI 2511

1. FORMER GOVERNOR MARTTI MIETTUNEN ON NOVEMBER 21 SAW PRESIDENT KEKKONEN AND THEN ANNOUNCED THAT HIS EFFORTS TO FORM A NEW MAJORITY POLITICAL GOVERNMENT HAD COME TO AN UNSUCCESSFUL END.

2. KEKKONEN THEN CALLED IN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN SORSA AND CENTER PARTY CHAIRMAN VIROLAINEN. KEKKONEN IS REPORTED TO HAVE OFFERED SOCIAL DEMOCRATS OPPORTUNITY TO FORM MINORITY GOVERNMENT, WHICH THEY DECLINED. KEKKONEN IS ALSO REPORTED AS HAVING TOLD VIROLAINEN THAT HE HOPED THAT AT LEAST CENTER PARTY WOULD NOT SHIRK ITS RESPONSIBILITY.

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3. CENTER AND LIBERAL PARTY COUNCILS ON NOVEMBER 22-23 GAVE THEIR PARTY EXECUTIVES AUTHORITY TO NEGOTIATE PARTICIPATION IN A CENTRIST MINORITY GOVERNMENT, IF NECESSARY IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT SOME KIND OF POLITICAL GOVERNMENT. SWEDISH PARTY, WHICH BELONGS TO CENTRIST GROUP, HAS ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT IT WOULD BE READY TO PARTICIPATE IN MINORITY GOVERNMENT.

4. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT KEKKONEN WILL DECIDE THE MATTER, AND HAS NOT YET BEEN HEARD FROM, SPECULATION NOW IS THAT A CENTRIST MINORITY GOVERNMENT WILL BE FORMED, POSSIBLY AS EARLY AS THIS WEEK. THREE CENTRIST PARTIES ONLY HAVE 58 OUT OF 200 SEATS, AND WOULD HAVE TO DEPEND ON SUPPORT FROM EITHER RIGHT OR LEFT. NO ONE WOULD BE TOO EAGER TO BRING IT DOWN RIGHT AWAY, SINCE THEY THEN WOULD BE PLACED IN POSITION OF PROVIDING ALTERNATIVE. THE LEFTIST PARTIES HAVE NOT SAID WHAT THEY WILL DO. ON THE RIGHT, THE CHRISTIANS HAVE SAID THAT THEY TOO CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS BELONGING TO THE CENTRIST GROUP AND THAT THEY COULD NOT SUPPORT SUCH A GOVERNMENT UNLESS A MEMBER OF IT. THE CONSERVATIVES HAVE SAID THAT THEY WILL APPROACH A CENTRIST MINORITY GOVERNMENT AS ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT, BASED ON THE ISSUE, BUT FROM A RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION POSITION. THEY WOULD MUCH PREFER A NON-SOCIALIST MAJORITY GOVERNMENT, WITH THEMSELVES AND THE CHRISTIANS INCLUDED -- WHICH WOULD HAVE 102 OUT OF 200 SEATS. IN REPLY TO CRITICISM THAT BASED ON PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE ONE COULD NOT RELY ON CONSERVATIVES TO DELIVER ALL THEIR VOTES FOR THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR LAX PARTY DISCIPLINE, CONSERVATIVE PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP CHAIRMAN SALMENKIVI ON NOVEMBER 23 STATED THAT PARTY COULD CONSIDER CHANGING ITS RULES TO REQUIRE PARTY DISCIPLINE OF ITS MP'S. CHANCES FOR A NON-SOCIALIST MAJORITY GOVERNMENT STILL APPEAR MINIMAL, HOWEVER.

5. IF A CENTRIST MINORITY GOVERNMENT IS FORMED, IT WOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO LAST FOR MORE THAN A FEW MONTHS. ALTHOUGH IT WOULD NOT POLARIZE FINNISH POLITICAL LIFE AS MUCH AS A NON-SOCIALIST MAJORITY GOVERNMENT

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WOULD, IT IS NEVERTHELESS CLEAR THAT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS STAYING OUT OF GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE SUCCESSFUL INCOMES POLICY NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH HAVE JUST STARTED, MUCH MORE DIFFICULT -- IF NOT EVEN IMPOSSIBLE.

6. ONLY OTHER ALTERNATIVE APPEARS TO BE FOR KEKKONEN TO LET PRESENT LIINAMAA EXPERTS GOVERNMENT CONTINUE FOR THE TIME BEING, OR TO FURTHER POLITICIZE IT BY

EXCHANGING SOME OF THE MOST NON-POLITICAL MINISTERS
FOR PARTY REPRESENTATIVES.

7. ALTHOUGH THE PROGRAM FOR A CENTRIST MINORITY GOVERN-
MENT IS NOT YET CLEAR, CENTER PARTY CHAIRMAN VIROLAINEN
HAS EMPHASIZED RE BUDGET COMMITTING MORE RESOURCES TO
EMPLOYMENT, ACTIVITIES IN THE LESS DEVELOPED PARTS OF
FINLAND, AND DAIRY FARMING. VIROLAINEN ALSO POINTED
OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THIS SHOULD BE DONE WITHOUT EXCEEDING
THE LIMITS OF THE LIINAMAA GOVERNMENT BUDGET PROPOSAL.
ON ECONOMIC POLICY, HE CALLED FOR MORE EFFECTIVE PRICE
CONTROLS AND WAGE CONTROLS AS WELL, AND SAID THAT SOON
CREDIT POLICIES WOULD HAVE TO BE EASED SOMEWHAT IN ORDER
TO GENERATE BUYING POWER AND EMPLOYMENT. GENERALLY SPEAKING
A CENTRIST GOVERNMENT WOULD ESCHEW MOST OF THE SOCIAL
DEMOCRATIC DEMANDS FOR GREATER CONTROL OF INVESTMENTS
AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND MIGHT BE MORE WILLING ACCEPT
INCOME RESTRAINT.
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